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SUBJECT: POLAND AND ODIHR - NEW MATERIAL TO COMBAT
ANTI-SEMITISM

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11. (SBU) Summary. On March 5, the Polish Ministry of Education and the OSCE Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) launched a set of teaching tools to combat anti-Semitism. The materials are specifically aimed at middle-school age (gymnazium) students. Discussions are underway to have these new teaching tools included in the new national curriculum which the Ministry of Education is developing for middle schools. The roll-out of this material is a great step forward. Mission Poland is also cooperating with a number of institutions to combat anti-Semitism and expand Holocaust education. End Summary.

Teaching Tools to Combat Anti-Semitism

12. (U) ODIHR cooperated with the Polish Ministry of Education, local governments and schools, and Polish NGOs to adapt these pedagogical materials to combat anti-Semitism in Poland. The materials, developed originally by the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, are now available on the internet. ODIHR said that Poland is the fifth country to roll out the teaching tools. Polish experts contributing to preparation of the materials included the Polish-German Center in Krakow, the Pedagogical University of Krakow, and the International Center for Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Oswiecim. Following an international template, the materials in Polish include a teachers guide and three student workbooks: 1) "History of Anti-Semitism in Europe up to 1945," 2) "Anti-Semitism: a Never Ending Struggle?," and 3) "Prejudices. You too?" The material is not a history of the Jews in Poland, but is designed to teach about the problem of anti-Semitism in an international context with specific examples from Polish history. It highlights the fact that being "Jewish" and "Polish" are not mutually exclusive. The material can be incorporated into classes on social studies, ethics, history, or literature and is addressed to this younger middle-school (gymnazium) audience with the intent of correcting stereotypes and prejudices at an earlier age.

Launch Event and Official Endorsement

13. (SBU) The launch of the material in Warsaw on March 5 amounted to an official endorsement by the Polish government. Professor Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, an 87-year old Auschwitz survivor and the Prime Minister's Plenipotentiary for International Dialogue, gave the keynote speech. He was joined by Ambassador Janez Lenarcic, Director of ODIHR, and the Deputy Minister of Education, Krzysztof Stanowski, who gave the Ministry of Education's official endorsement of the material. During the launch, Dr. Piotr Trojanski from the

Pedagogical University of Krakow, noted that the Ministry of Education is developing a new middle-school curriculum and expressed hope that the Ministry would directly incorporate the new materials so that the work to date on the anti-Semitism project would not be in vain. Following the event, ODIHR's principal project advisor, Norbert Hinterleitner, told poloff that ODIHR is optimistic that the Ministry will incorporate the materials into its new curriculum. The event was immediately followed by a two-day teacher-training course at the National In-Service Teacher Training Center in which 20 teachers participated.

Mission Poland's Engagement

14. (U) Mission Poland actively supports Holocaust education programs. In 2008, the Embassy and the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous in New York (JFR) hosted a conference for teachers to distribute a poster set on rescue called "Traits that Transcend," provided in Polish translation. The Embassy is partnering with the Center for Citizenship Education to host another conference for 120 middle and high school teachers on April 3, 2009, again featuring distribution of the poster sets and workshops on how to use them. Elizabeth Edelstein from New York's Museum of Jewish Heritage will conduct workshops throughout Poland in the week prior to the Warsaw conference. We also sponsor 4-5 teachers annually to participate in US-based Holocaust teacher training.

15. (U) ConGen Krakow supports Holocaust education programs in the southern region as well. Krakow cooperates with three major institutions: The Auschwitz Jewish Center in Oswiecim, the Galicia Jewish Museum in Krakow, and the newly opened Holocaust Studies program at Jagiellonian University in Krakow, which have a cooperative agreement and share and advertise each others programs. Both museums have extensive

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education programs which ConGen Krakow helps through small grants. The Auschwitz Jewish Center, for example, has an ongoing program for high school students about Jewish life in Poland and religious tolerance called "My Former Neighbors." Additionally, ConGen Krakow supported a traveling exhibition and educational materials for the Galicia Jewish Museum on Nazi labor camps. This exhibition is currently touring Poland through cooperation with the Institute of National Memory (IPN). ConGen Krakow also helps organize lectures for students and teachers at the Holocaust Studies program at Jagiellonian University. For example, State's Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues, Christian Kennedy, gave a lecture there on property restitution. In addition, ConGen Krakow cooperates with the newly-created Raphael Lemkin Center for the Prevention of Genocide to bring together government officials from over ten countries for a week-long seminar, sponsored in part by the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, on how to recognize the signs of and prevent genocide.

Comment

16. (SBU) The Ministry of Education's official endorsement and funding for this material is a significant step forward in terms of Polish efforts to combat anti-Semitism through the Polish educational system. There is certainly a need for both the Polish-language material and administrative support for its use. Our impression from tolerance teachers is that they currently teach this type of material primarily in the context of after-school international clubs or in English classes, perhaps because the material available so far has been primarily English-based or the teachers are more internationally-oriented. Although the inclusion of the materials in the national curriculum would not make their use mandatory, it would significantly increase the likelihood of their use by middle-school teachers -- as teachers and administrators become aware of the existence and availability of (inexpensive) Polish-language materials. Mission Poland

will continue to work with teachers and others to promote tolerance and combat anti-Semitism. We will also monitor the progress of the curriculum development and report any developments.

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